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AUTHOR Bottoms, Gene
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ABSTRACT

While strongly supporting the passage of the Youth Act of 1980 (S-2385), the American Vocational Association (AVA) contends that improvements are needed in the bill in order to effect optimal linkages between employment and education agencies toward solving the youth unemployment problem. Specific changes would (1) further the potential of vocational education toward moving disadvantaged youth into stable jobs; (2) assure that quality jobs will be developed; and (3) guarantee Comprehensive Employment and Training Act/Vocational Education linkages as well as S-2385/vocational education linkages. Specifically, six concepts contained in S-2385 and the President's Youth Initiative are supported: (1) basic skills grants; (2) planning efforts linking school programs to the community; (3) using existing resources to link new programs to existing educational programs; (4) allocating a minimum of 25% of the funds to vocational education skills development; (5) flexibility of decision making, allowing creativity at state and local levels; and (6) support for a higher quality education an an opportunity for youths to become more stable in jobs. (Five suggested changes to the overall bill, six to title I, and eleven to title II are outlined.) (MEK)

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STATEMENT

OF

DR. GENE BOTTOMS

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

AMERICAN VOCATIONAL ASSOCIATION

BEFORE THE

SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON

EMPLOYMENT, POVERTY AND MIGRATORY LABOR

CHAIRMAN

HONORABLE GAYLORD NELSON

MARCH 13, 1980

CE 024 842

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee,

The American Vocational Association (AVA) has a commitment to the educationally and economically disadvantaged youth of this nation. The members of AVA in all states and communities are seeking an opportunity to reduce the high incidence of youth unemployment through quality vocational education and to build more effective partnerships between education and the community.

Mr. Chairman, we in AVA know of your long standing interest in vocational education and the close working relationships you have with the vocational educators in your state. We express appreciation to you and the members of the subcommittee for your support.

As you consider the proposed Youth Act of 1980 (S - 2385) we offer assistance to do whatever is in the scope of our association to encourage the enactment of the concepts in this legislation. Also, Mr. Chairman, we are aware of other bills before this subcommittee addressing youth employment (S-1129, S2021, S-2218 and S-2286). We commend the interest of those who have introduced the bills, however, we encourage the subcommittee to seek a comprehensive approach to resolving the problems of youth unemployment. This approach will enhance not only the employment of youth but also provide for an educational component that will assist their personal development and strengthen their future working life.

On June 26, 1979, AVA testified before the House Subcommittee on Employment Opportunities. At that time, AVA called for <u>comprehensive legislation</u> to address the youth employment problem. Specifically we recommended that:

1. The public service jobs focus within the Youth Title of the Comprehenisve Employment and Training Act (CETA) be coupled with an equal focus on the educational development of disadvantaged youth to give them the proper preparation to become productive workers in our society;
2. The legislation have as its basic intent the development of the productive capacity of disadvantaged youth through education focusing on both basic and employment skills.

3. The new youth initiative legislation include both a preventive and cure focus to meet the needs of in-school and out-of-school disadvantaged youth;

4. The legislation be designed to aid states and local communities in institutionalizing a pattern of on-the-job learning and related instruction aimed at helping disadvantaged youth obtain stable employment;

5 The legislation create a true partnership at the local level among education, CETA and the other acommunity organizations in planning and operating programs to serve youth.

The Administration is to be commended for sending to Congress the Youth Employment and Training Act of 1980 that incorporates most of these concepts. The Administration's proposal outlines a comprehensive effort to connect education, the CETA system and the community together in programs for disadvantaged youth. These linkages, which will provide jobs, basic education skills, employment skills and supportive services will strengthen the capacity of states and local communities to help themselves. Working together within the community, the public and the private employment sector will be able to expand their efforts, coordinate their activities and reach more people in need.

One of the most important facets of the Administration's proposal is its signal to the education community that it is in the national interest to make American education more effective in preparing and assisting disadvantaged youth to move from school to work. The resources from this new legislation will hlep to build the capacity of local agencies and institutions to create a true bridge between school and work.

The Youth Initiative recognizes that vocational education is an important component of the American education system and that it provides vital assistance to disadvantaged youth in obtaining stable jobs. The initiative embraces a concept that we in vocational education have held for decades: that education cannot serve the disadvantaged, unemployed youth of this nation without a concerted, cooperative effort on the parts of both vocational and academic educators.

In addition, Mr. Chairman, there are specific concepts both in the Administration's initiative and in S-2385 that we support:

1. Grants to state and local education agencies for basic skills education;

2. Allocation of at least 25 percent of the funds to vocational education employment skills development;

3. Local and state planning efforts to link the educational program to the community;

4. The use of existing resources to link these new efforts to the total education program;

5. The local and state decision-making authority and the flexibility to be creative;

6. The idea that out-of-school youth, as well as in-school youth, must be provided with opportunities to become better educated and employable in stable jobs.

While AVA is supportive of the Administraiton's proposal and the Youth Act of 1980 (S-2385) introduced by Senator Williams, Senator Pell and Senator Randolph, we will make the case that some improvements are needed to further: a) the potentail of vocational education to make its unique contribution toward moving disadvantaged youth into stable jobs; b) the assurance that quality programs will be developed; c) collaboration and communication between education and the prime sponsor and between the Youth Initiative and the existing Vocational Education Law.

The AVA recommendations, while based upon the Administration's document, are addressing concept and should apply to whatever legislation the subcommittee will address.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING THE YOUTH ACT OF 1980, S-2385

For vocational education to be a full fledged partner in a comprehensive youth employment effort involving general education, the prime sponsor, and vocational education, some improvements are needed in the Administraion's proposal.

The consideration of the subcommittee is requested for the following:

(1) The purpose of Title I of S-2385 which is to provide training and employment programs for eligible youth to assist them in obtaining job opportunities and to improve their opportunities for future employment and increased earnings is commendable. While we agree with the purpose , we feel that the task of providing youth training progrms is one that must actively involve vocational education in the delivery of services. We urge this subcommittee to make sure that, during the passage of new youth legislation, the partnership between vocational education, the CETA prime sponsor and the private sector be firmly set in place. The Prime Sponsors Basic Programs (Section 412), the Equal Chance Supplements (Section 413), and the Governors Special Statewide Youth Services Program (Section 418) all call for strong emphasis on education and training programs. No mention is made as to who will provide these services other than the prime sponsor. The vocational education component is not evident and the necessity to link with the vocational education community is not clear.

(2) Many of the youth targeted by the Youth Initiative are structurally unemployed. They lack basic academic skills as well as job skills. The provision of only one remedy will not solve their employment problems. Vocational education programs must be actively involved with the rest of education in the provision of the education component. We have found in our observations that these youth cannot move from public service jobs to jobs in the private sector unless they are given an educational boost. The subcommittee should note that the Education Cooperation Incentive Grants as contained in S-2385 will not provide for utilization of the total resources in vocational education. There is a lack of recognition for the complexity of vocational education and the term "local education agency" is used as the agency to make agreements with the prime sponsor. Many postsecondary vocational education programs occur in institutions that have no administra-

tive lines to the local education agency. If the total education program is to be developed for all youth, flexibility at the local level to work through all educational institutions and agencies must be maintained.

(3) It is imperative to initiate both a jobs program funded under CETA and a targeted educational program funded under education if the problems of youth are to be resolved. This combination will make the job experience an effecitve learning experience and will provide individuals with the necessary related basic education and specific job skills necessary to become a productive worker in America.

(4) In no way can or should the vocational education community seek to resolve the problems of youth alone. The concepts we support and the proposals we make have, as the very core, collaboration between education, the employment and training sector, government, community-based organizations, business and industry and organized labor, and the lay citizens.

It is, however, important to note the unique contriubtion that vocational education can make to the disadvantaged, unemployed youth:

> It will allow these youth to connect school and work over a period of time.
>
> Vocational education will provide skill training in occupational areas for which demand exists and in which these youth can then be employed.
>
> Vocational education can meet unique and individual student needs through specially tailored programs.
>
> Vocational education can help to develop, conduct and administer programs in cooperation with other educational areas and outside agencies that can be tailor-made to these youth.

In addition, there are other specific recommendations that could be considered by this subcommittee prior to passage of the Youth Initiative. These specific recommendations are contained in the following pages.

RECOMMENDED CHANGES IN TITLE I & II

Specific Standards for Work Experience Programs

In both Title I and II of the proposal, work experience is treated in a casual manner. Work experience may or may not be appropriate for disadvantaged youth. Work experience that is unsupervised, and not a part of an instructional program, may often teach the wrong skills. Isabel Sawhill (1979) finds that "premature placement of young people in unstructured jobs or work experience programs may lead to personal failure, to the learning of bad work habits and to disappointed expectations on the part of youth themselves and their employers."

On the other hand, a school-managed work experience program can be a useful instructional technique if it contains the essential elements for learning.

The Youth Employment and Training Act should set forth some minimum standards for work experience. Work experience must be purposefully planned and connected with related in-school learning toward the ultimate end of making youth employable in a stable job. This is more likely to occur if the following standards are required for all work experience programs:

1. A written, cooperative agreement between the employer, the school and the students.
2. Participation in an academic course and related vocational instruction coupled with the work experience program.
3. Work experiences should be planned and supervised jointly by the school and employers.

AVA recommends that eligible youth be provided with school-managed work-site learning as a part of the educational process. These programs should be structured to facilitate the education and employability of the student and should be a coordinated effort of the community and education.

Recommended Changes in Title I

Within Title I we recommend six additional changes as follows:

1. Fourteen and fifteen year old disadvantaged youth should be eligible for public service job stipends if they are enrolled in an approved Work Experience Career Exploration Program (WECEP). This will provide for the expansion of a very successful program.

2. All youth receiving public service job stipends should be required to enroll in a related education program, following the criteria set forth in our recommendation concerning all work experience programs. This will assure that disadvantaged youth get both the job experience and the education needed for stable, private sector employment.

3. Students enrolled in postsecondary employment skills programs should be eligible for stipends. Such youth often need financial support to remain in school.

4. Recipients of funds under the new youth law should be allowed to use these funds to meet the matching requirements under Section 110 A-B of the Vocational Education Act of 1976 (PL 94-482). This will facilitate the development of joint CETA/vocational education programs and will provide for equal treatment of disadvantaged youth under all legislation.

5. Title I funds should be allowed for stipends to support vocational education students who meet the definitions of "disadvantaged" and "handicapped" cited in the Vocational Education Act of 1976.

6. Title I should specify that employment skills preparation is an acceptable use of CETA funds.

Recommended Changes in Title II

Within Title II we recommend a number of changes as follows:

(1) Use of funds. Clarification is required concerning several requirements regarding the use of funds, including:

a) That a 75 percent set-aside of the basic and supplemental formula funds can be used for both basic skills and employment skills at the discretion of local education agencies and that a 25 percent set-aside for the basic and supplemental formula funds must be used only for employment skills programs. This will assure that at least 25 percent of the funds are expended for the purposes of employment skill development of disadvantaged youth.

b) That local systems are encouraged to use 50 percent of the 75 percent set-aside of the basic and supplemental formula for grades seven, eight and nine. As the legislation's specifications are written, it could be interpreted that 50 percent of the entire

amount must be used for grades seven through nine which seriously limits efforts to return out-of-school youth to the secondary school.

c) Indicate that the planning grant of $50 million will assure a focus on and involvement of vocational education. This clarification is needed to assure that a plan emerges at the local level that relates basic skills and employment skills instruction.

(2) Definition of Employment Skills Instruction. This instruction should be defined as organized educational programs which are directly related to the preparation of individuals for paid or unpaid employment, or for additional preparation for a career requiring other than a baccalaureate or advanced degree, or instruction related to the occupation(s) for which the students are in training or instruction necessary for the student to benefit from such training, or instruction to aid individuals in making a career choice and other instruction needed by the individual to aid in seeking, holding and preparing for ajob.

(3) Out-of-School Youth. The limitation of a maximum of 30 percent set-aside for out-of-school youth should be removed. The State Board of Vocational Education should be allowed to decide how much of the 25 percent set-aside under the basic and supplemental formula will be used for out-of-school youth. This gives greater flexibility to the states in the use of federal dollars to meet their greatest needs. The State Board of Vocational Education should also be allowed to mount employment skills programs for out-of-school disadvantaged youth up to age 21. This makes Title I and II consistent and assures that vocational education training stations will be made available to serve all unemployed disadvantaged youth.

(4) Purposes of Employment Skills Funds. The following purposes of employment skills funds should be specified in Title II.

a) The preparation of individualized education and employability plans that include vocational education and related services needed by the individuals to achieve their career goals.

b) Provision of institution-based vocational education and training necessary to enable participants to meet their education and training goals.

c) Provisions to improve institutional capacity to provide transitional vocational education services and training.

d) Provision of cooperative education, or other innovative approaches to supervised job experience, on-the-job training, work experience or career exploration under the school's in-school instructions as a part of an educational sequence resulting in the participant achieving the education and career goals.

e) The assignment of a trained individual to act as a personal link between the participant and the institution or employer or with other persons and institutions with which the participant is involved in pursuing a program.

f) Career guidance services which shall be available for participants as needed throughout the period of their participation in programs under this part.

g) Out-reach and recruitment activities as necessary to inform potential participants of the opportunities provided in programs carried on under this part and to encourage them to become participants.

h) Making available to participants the supplies required in connection with their carrying out the education and training phases of their individualized plans.

i) Making available to participants the transportation which is necessary for them to carry out their individualized plans.

j) Developmental activities designed to improve the leadership abilities of disadvantaged youth.

k) Activities enabling the approved institutions to more effectively deliver services to the target group. These activities may include, but not be limited to, staff development, faculty exchange and instructional equipment.

l) Job placement and follow-through activities designed to assist disadvantaged youth in moving from entry jobs to advanced technical skills occupations that are in demand, including supportive job creation and job development activities in depressed communities that would serve to equip disadvantaged youth for self-employment or employment in new and expanding businesses and industries.

m) The establishment of vocational-based youth enterprises to stimulate community improvement as learning activities for youth and any other type of services which will contribute to the ability of participants to secure and retain stable employment. Use of funds for these activities will greatly assist state and local education jurisdictions to improve their capacity to provide employment skills instruction to disadvantaged youth.

(5) Planning. To avoid duplicating adminstrative structures at state and local levels, increasing paperwork requirements and regulations, already-established advisory committees and planning mechanisms should be utilized when appropriate.

As a first step, Title II should require the State Board of Vocational Education to outline procedures for administering basic and supplemental formula grants for employment skills by amending the state plan called for in the Vocational Education Act and requiring a review of the procedures by the State Superintendent of Schools in those states where the State Board of Vocational Education is separate from the State Superintendent of Schools.

A second provision should allow for simplification of the local planning process by requiring the state to establish the following criteria to be followed by targeted local education agencies and other eligible institutions:

a) Each participant must use the established Vocational Education Advisory Councils where appropriate. These councils will have representation of parents, youth, private sector business representatives and prime sponsors to advise the local education agency on the development of a plan that brings together basic skills, employment skills, on-the-job experience and supportive services designed to move disadvantaged youth into stable employment.

b) Each participant must meet the criteria contained in the Title II legis ation.

c) Each participant must develop a local plan that shows how basic skills and employment instruction will be integrated.

d) Each participant must develop a local plan showing how existing secondary and postsecondary vocational training institutions will be used to provide disadvantaged youth with relevant employment skills training.

e) Each participant must develop a local plan that will show how staff development activities will be initiated to assure improved educational outcomes for disadvantaged youth.

f) Each participant must develop a local plan that will show how activities will relate to existing vocational activities under the Vocational Education Act and what support the prime sponsor has agreed to provide.

(6) The Education-CETA Link. In order to coordinate the education component more effectively with the jobs program, there should be legislative language indicating strong linkages between education and CETA. This language should call for collaboration and a partnership at the state and local levels. The partnership can be built on the following.

a) The utilization of existing councils, commissions and committees already mandated, rather than by creating additional groups to advise, plan and coordinate.

b) The provision of outreach services to identify and engage potential clients.

c) The identification of needs through existing management information systems.

d) The requirement that all CETA-eligible youth have an education component of their programs.

e) The establishment of assessment and diagnostic centers within the education system for CETA and education clients.

f) Joint planning to link the demand side of the labor market closer to education.

(7) The Secondary-Postsecondary Link. Articulation has been a primary target in education for many years. Youth and adults mature and learn in stages and not all at one time and in one setting. The implications are that both secondary and postsecondary education institutions must be involved in a sequential program to alleviate the structural problems of youth unemployment. The linkages between secondary and postsecondary education institutions are based on:

a) The need to utilize existing educational institutions in the youth effort before expanding facilities.

b) The necessity to have a full range of programs for youth who drop out or who leave school.

c) The need for coordinated planning and utilization of resources.

(8) Linkages between the Basic Skills and the Employment Skills Program. The Administration's proposal states that "Key factors contributing to high rates of youth unemployment are the lack of basic reading, writing and computational skills and lack of knowledge of general employment and job-seeking skills." While recognizing the validity of this statement, it is also true that these are

not the only key factors. The acquisition of job skills for unemployed youth is a necessity. Knowledge of employment is not enough. Structurally unemployed youth must know how to do something or must possess a saleable skill, in addition to having a working knowledge of the basics, if they are to change their status.

The legislative language must, of necessity, require a collaboration between vocational educators and academic educators to plan a comprehensive program for each disadvantaged youth individually. This program should include basic education skills and also should contain a series of employment skills appropriate to the age group and capacity of the individual.

(9) Teacher Education and Staff Development. Funds are needed to provide for teacher education and staff development activities to prepare vocational teachers to work effectively with basic skills teachers in serving the needs of youth in targeted communities.

(10) Services for Pregnant Teenagers. Consideration must be given in the new legislation to the increasing number of young girls who find themselves in the critically debilitating situation of early pregnancy and motherhood. Forced to drop out of school to give birth and keep the child, these young girsl are often unable to return to school in order to obtain the required skills for employment. To acquire the skills necessary to support themselves and their children, they must find some form of daycare. Without the assistance of a relative or friend, returning to school becomes almost impossible. The result is that these teenage parents and infants are tied to public assistance and left without any potential for further stable employment.

It is suggested that funds be allocated within the new youth legislation to enable teenage mothers to attend school in order to be trained for employment. Services would include those listed previously in addition to the provision of daycare.

Within these services, it is important to clarify the role of an adult, model-coordinator, such as home economics teachers, who would operate programs for these youth and aid these youth in acquiring necessary parenting skills and provide them with supportive help in acquiring job skills.

(11) Targeted Jobs Tax Credit. (PL 95-600, "Revenue Act of 1978") The targeted jobs tax credit is for qualified wages that an employer incurs or pays to members of a targeted group, (inlcuding youth participation in a qualified cooperative education program), after 1978 but before 1981. This provision in the law (Title III, Sec. 321) has enhanced the efforts of vocational educators to locate and place students in desirable training stations. It has been a positive step to enlist business and industry in the massive fight to reduce unemployment. Thomas W. Power, General Counsel for the Food Service and Lodging Institute, testified before the House Subcommittee on Select Revenue Measures (September 17, 1979) that, "Our companies hire from the other six targeted sectors . . . but they know that an employee in a cooperative education program will perform." We urge you to take the appropriate action to have extended the provisions in the "Revenue Act of 1978" that allow employers the provisions for the credit when they hire a youth participating in a qualified cooperative education program who is:

a) at least 16 years old but not over 19;

b) did not graduate from a high school or a vocational school;

c) is enrolled in and actively studying in a qualified education program;

In summary, AVA supports the passage of the Youth Act of 1980. This legislation should strengthen the existing vocational education programs and allow them to expand in order to serve the needs of disadvantaged and unemployed youth. We feel the concepts are strong even though minor improvements are needed. AVA requests an opportunity to work with you, Mr. Chairman, and the committee staff as you develop the legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the opportunity to present our views on youth and to make recommendations regarding proposed legislation.